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Fiscal Year 2004

Request for Applications

Food Stamp Program Outreach Grants

Letter of Intent Due Date: April 1, 2004

Application Due Date: May 14, 2004



Food Stamps Make America Stronger.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose	1
Background	1
SECTION II: REQUIREMENTS	2
Who May Apply: Eligible Entities	2
Funding	2
Allowable Uses of Funding	2
Materials Development	4
Self-Evaluation Plan	5
Grantee Meeting	5
Record Keeping and Reporting	6
Terms and Conditions	6
SECTION III: APPLICATION PROCESS	8
Letter of Intent	8
Application Procedures	8
Application Format	9
SECTION IV: REVIEW AND AWARD PROCESS	13
Application Screening, Review and Selection	13
Determination of Award Amounts	13
Technical Evaluation Criteria	14

Attachment I: Sample Project Plan Table

Attachment II: Electronic Application Outline

Attachment III: FSP Outreach Resources

Attachment IV: Technical Guidance on Confidentiality and Privacy Requirements

Attachment V: Quarterly Progress Report (Suggested Format)

Attachment VI: Final Progress Report (Suggested Format)

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has \$1.0 million, contingent upon availability, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2004, for a unique grant competition to study effective strategies to inform and educate eligible low-income people not currently participating in the Food Stamp Program (FSP) about the nutrition benefits of the program, eligibility rules, and how to apply so that they can make an informed decision about whether to participate in the program. These grants are being awarded under authority provided by the Food Stamp Act of 1977, Section 17(a)(1), 7 U.S.C. 2026(a)(1). This section allows the Secretary of Agriculture to award grants to undertake research that will improve the effectiveness of the FSP in delivering nutrition-related benefits. The Secretary is also authorized in Section 17(b)(1), 7 U.S.C. 2026(a)(1) to waive, with certain exceptions, requirements of the Food Stamp Act that are necessary to conduct pilot projects of limited duration in one or more sites in order to test program changes that might increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the FSP.

Background

The FSP is the cornerstone of the nation's nutrition safety net. It is the largest of the USDA's 15 domestic nutrition assistance programs. The FSP provides crucial support to needy households to buy the food they need for good health and helps low income people make the transition from welfare to work. Participants in the FSP are provided a monthly allotment of food benefits via an electronic benefits card that is used to purchase food at authorized retail stores. Communities benefit from the economic impact of food stamp redemption in local stores. FNS manages the FSP at the Federal level. Each State administers the FSP according to the rules and regulations put forth by FNS.

Over the past decade, participation among people who are eligible for food stamp benefits has fluctuated according to changes in policy and the economy. In March 1994, participation reached an all time high of 28 million people nationwide. By July 2000, participation had dropped to a low of 16.9 million people. As of 2001, the participation rate among those eligible for the program was 62 percent. FNS's strategic goal is for a participation rate of 68 percent by 2005.

There are many reasons why people do not participate in the FSP. These include:

- Unawareness and misunderstanding;
- Welfare stigma; and
- Pervasive myths.

FNS is working to address these issues through a number of outreach activities, such as:

- A media campaign featuring radio and transit advertising;
- An educational campaign featuring free flyers and posters with the theme "Food Stamps Make America Stronger," available for order at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/info.htm>;
- A toll free number (1-800-221-5689); callers receive a packet of information about the program and how to apply;
- An online pre-screening tool available at www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov; and
- Basic program documents in 35 languages, which are available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/translations.htm>.

The priority target populations for FSP outreach activities are:

- Working poor;
- Immigrants; and
- Seniors.

SECTION II: REQUIREMENTS

Who May Apply: Eligible Entities

Entities eligible to apply for this grant competition are:

- Public organizations, with the exception of State and local food stamp agencies;* and
- Private, non-profit organizations.

Examples of eligible entities include, but are not limited to:

- Faith-based organizations;
- Community groups;
- Food banks;
- Public health clinics; and
- School districts.

Recipients of FNS outreach grants under the “Food Stamp Program Research Grants to Improve Access Through the Use of New Technology and Partnerships” awarded in fiscal year 2001 and 2002 may not apply. One of the goals of the current solicitation is to help FNS determine whether providing smaller grants to smaller, community-based organizations is successful in getting outreach messages to the target populations. FNS is especially interested in obtaining new and innovative approaches from new partners in its initiative to reach non-participating people. For this reason, FNS has excluded entities that received FSP grants previously, since they are already participating in FNS’ outreach efforts.

*Funding for outreach activities performed by State and local food stamp agencies are governed by the Food Stamp Act, which authorizes FNS to pay only 50 percent of a State’s allowable costs for authorized administrative expenses, including optional food stamp outreach activities. Thus, by law, FNS cannot pay States or local food stamp agencies 100 percent of the costs for food stamp outreach, as would be the case if such agencies were to receive these grants.

Funding

Up to \$1.0 million is available in FY 2004 for grant awards under this program. Grantees will be allowed to use the grant funds for the duration of the project period, not to exceed two years. The maximum grant award amount is \$125,000. FNS anticipates awarding approximately eight to ten grant awards. Submission of an application does not guarantee funding. Grantees will be selected on a competitive basis, based on an objective review of their proposals according to the technical evaluation criteria outlined in this request for application. Funds will be provided through USDA’s Grant Award/Letter of Credit process utilizing an electronic payment method. If the option to use the Letter of Credit payment process is not viable for any applicant chosen for award, payment will be made via an advance/reimbursement method also using an electronic funds transfer method.

Allowable Uses of Funding

Applicants must select one of the following strategies for their proposed outreach project:

Strategy 1: Community Events/Education Campaign: Applicants choosing this strategy will conduct or participate in at least five community events during the project period, and conduct a community-wide education campaign to raise awareness of where and how to apply for food stamps, and refute common myths surrounding the program. These events should be designed specifically to highlight the nutritional benefits of the FSP, and how and where to apply. A letter of commitment or memorandum of agreement from any partners is required.

In addition, a letter of commitment or memorandum of agreement with both the State and local

food stamp offices is required. Applicants must use the USDA “Food Stamps Make America Stronger” materials (see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/info.htm>) either alone or in conjunction with other materials. Adaptation of the USDA materials to meet local needs is encouraged.

Strategy 2: Partnerships with Employers: Applicants choosing this strategy will partner with employers of low-wage workers potentially eligible for food stamps to conduct outreach. Examples of such strategies include distribution of informational material at work to low-wage workers, making pre-screening tools and technical assistance available via computer on employer premises, or allowing time off for application purposes. Also, efforts to debunk myths surrounding eligibility for food stamps while employed and educate employers about the health and retention benefits of the FSP could be components. A letter of commitment or memorandum of agreement is required from partnering employers.

In addition, a letter of commitment or memorandum of agreement with both the State and local food stamp offices is required. Applicants must use the USDA “Food Stamps Make America Stronger” materials (see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/info.htm>) either alone or in conjunction with other materials. Adaptation of the USDA materials to meet local needs is encouraged.

Strategy 3: Partnerships with Food Retailers: Applicants choosing this strategy will partner with authorized food stamp retail grocers to conduct outreach to potentially eligible non-participating people. Examples of this strategy might include retailers hosting pre-screening events with authorized retailers, working with retailers to post outreach messages at visible places in the store, and facilitating retailer events to promote participation in the FSP. A letter of commitment or memorandum of agreement is required from partnering retailers.

In addition, a letter of commitment or memorandum of agreement with both the State and local food stamp offices is required. Applicants must use the USDA “Food Stamps Make America Stronger” materials (see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/info.htm>) either alone or in conjunction with other materials. Adaptation of the USDA materials to meet local needs is encouraged.

Strategy 4: Partnerships with Other FNS Programs: Applicants choosing this strategy will partner with other FNS programs to reach people dually eligible for these programs and food stamps, but not yet participating in the FSP. For example, community groups could distribute informational material about food stamps to commodity food package recipients, or with schools to inform parents of children receiving free lunches about their potential eligibility for the FSP. A letter of commitment or memorandum of agreement is required from partnering local programs.

In addition, a letter of commitment or memorandum of agreement with both the State and local food stamp offices is required. Applicants must use the USDA “Food Stamps Make America Stronger” materials (see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/info.htm>) either alone or in conjunction with other materials. Adaptation of the USDA materials to meet local needs is encouraged.

Strategy 5: Outstationing/Site Visiting: Applicants choosing this strategy will host outstationed local food stamp workers at their site, and/or set up programs for case workers, staff, or volunteers to go to other locations such as Section 8 housing or places of worship, to do outreach and educate non-participating potentially eligible people about food stamp benefits. A letter of commitment or memorandum of agreement is required from partnering programs.

In addition, a letter of commitment or memorandum of agreement with both the State and local food stamp offices is required. Applicants must use the USDA “Food Stamps Make America Stronger” materials (see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/info.htm>) either alone or in conjunction with other materials. Adaptation of the USDA materials to meet local needs is encouraged.

All applicants are required to:

- Provide a letter of commitment or memorandum of agreement with both the State and local food stamp offices;

- Provide a letter of commitment or memorandum of agreement with any entity that will play a crucial role in the outreach strategy (such as the type of partners described above); and
- Use “Food Stamps Make America Stronger” materials (see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/info.htm>) either alone or in conjunction with other materials, adapted to meet local needs.

All strategies might also involve the following activities:

- Pre-screening potentially eligible but non-participating people using the FNS pre-screening tool or another pre-screening tool already developed. Development of new pre-screening tools will not be supported under this grant program.
- Training and use of volunteers to conduct food stamp outreach.
- Use of culturally and linguistically appropriate materials and/or native speakers to bridge gaps with populations with limited English proficiency. FNS has materials available in 35 languages at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/translations.htm>.
- Formation of local community coalitions focused on food stamp outreach in order to bring all outreach partners to one table.

Please refer to Attachment III for a complete list of FNS outreach resources available to potential grantees.

Plans to implement any of the strategies should focus on the quality of contacts with potentially eligible non-participating persons with the end result of an educated choice being made by the individual to participate or not participate in the FSP. Please note that recruitment, including provision of financial incentives to potentially eligible food stamp recipients, is not allowed.

It is preferable that all strategies be targeted to one or more of the following populations:

- Working poor;
- Seniors; or
- Immigrants.

Materials Development

FNS reserves a royalty free copyright on any materials developed with this grant funding. This does not necessarily imply any endorsement or approval of the contents of the materials.

Materials developed with funding from this grant must be submitted in portable document format (PDF) and in hard copy. PDF is a file format which requires Adobe Acrobat software. When publicizing this work, including, but not limited to any written materials such as press releases and other media materials, grantees must acknowledge support of USDA, FNS, in substantially the form set below:

“This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.”

All materials developed under the grant must also feature the slogan “Food Stamps Make America Stronger.”

Grantees are required to comply with all applicable laws and regulations in regards to civil rights. All materials developed under this grant must also include the following non-discrimination statement:

"In accordance with Federal law and USDA policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political beliefs, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave, SW, Washington, DC, 20250 or call 202-720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer."

Self-Evaluation Plan

A self-evaluation is a required component of the grant project. Applicants must include a self-evaluation plan narrative in their proposal. The self-evaluation design should include three components: process, outcome, and cost-effectiveness.

Possible self-evaluation approaches include:

- *A Before/After Comparison:* In this type of evaluation, food stamp participation and application data for the target population is compared before and after the project to help determine whether changes in FSP participation can be attributed to the grant project intervention.
- *A Case/Control Comparison:* In this type of evaluation, a group that is similar to the target population but is not a part of the project is compared to the group participating in the project. The State or local food stamp agency or local hunger advocacy groups may be able to help identify a control group that has the same or similar characteristics as the area to be included in the grant project. Comparing data about food stamp applicants and participants for both the project and control areas will provide data to help determine whether changes in FSP participation can be attributed to the grant project intervention.
- *A combination* of both of the above approaches.

The following are examples of the types of data that could be collected to evaluate the project and measure the effectiveness of the project:

- Pre and post FSP participation data;
- Number of people informed about the FSP via each component of the project;
- Number of eligibility pre-screenings conducted and number of individuals/households eligible and not eligible based on pre-screenings (if applicable);
- Number of people assisted to electronically submit an application form; download a food stamp application; fill out an application; obtain verification; or complete the certification process;
- Number of people targeted for outreach that were certified for benefits; and
- Number of people targeted for outreach that were denied and the reason for denial.

The grantee must provide at least 60 days advance notice in writing of its intent to release, disclose, disseminate or publish information about the findings of this research project. FNS will consider the validity and appropriateness of the conclusions, as well as the possibility of adverse affects on the public or to the Agency. If the Grant Officer does not pose any objections in writing within the 60-day period, the grantee may proceed with its release.

FNS reserves the right to conduct a national evaluation of this grant program at any time. Grantees are required to participate in any national evaluation that FNS chooses to conduct.

Grantee Meeting

FNS plans to convene a grantee meeting for all selected applicants in the fall of 2004. All selected grantees are required to attend this important training session. Applicants should include funds in their budget for two people to travel to the Washington, DC metropolitan area for two days.

Record Keeping and Reporting

The selected grantees must operate a financial management system that provides accurate, current, and complete disclosure of the financial status of the projects.

Grantees selected in connection with this solicitation are required to submit:

- Quarterly and Final Financial Status Reports (Standard Form-269A);
- Quarterly and Final progress reports (See Attachments V and VI for Sample Formats);

Grantees are required to submit an electronic copy, along with one mailed original and one copy of each report. FNS will provide a reporting schedule and the address to which grantees may send reports at the time of award.

As outlined in the Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements, quarterly progress reports must contain the following:

- Description of the activities conducted during the reporting period;
- Major accomplishments including completion dates;
- Deviations from the proposed plan;
- Difficulties encountered and solutions to overcome them;
- Major activities for the next quarter; and
- Other pertinent information to describe progress, results, and barriers.

See Attachment V for a sample quarterly report format.

The final progress report must contain the following:

- A summary of the project from start to finish;
- Major accomplishments;
- Major barriers and how they were overcome;
- Results in terms of participation among the target population;
- All pertinent data to define and describe results;
- Recommendations for those interested in replicating the project; and
- Other pertinent information to describe progress, results, and barriers.

See Attachment VI for a sample final progress report format.

The reports are designed not only to inform FNS of the progress of your grant but also to help you track data and information as part of your self-evaluation. It is important to report positive, negative and inconclusive results. This helps FNS learn what does or doesn't work and to try to identify the reasons. The report format examples are provided to assist grantees with completion of their application.

Terms and Conditions

All costs under the grant awards are subject to the provisions of Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars A-87, Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments; A-122, Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations; and A-21, Cost Principles for Institutions of Higher Education as well as the USDA regulations. Information about implementing these circulars can be found at the following Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) citations.

- 7 CFR Part 3015: Uniform Federal Assistance Requirements;
- 7 CFR Part 3016: Uniform Federal Assistance Requirements for State and Local Governments;
- 7 CFR Part 3017, Subparts A-E: Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-

- procurement);
- 7 CFR Part 3021, Subpart F: Government-wide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants)
- 7 CFR Part 3018: New Restrictions on Lobbying; and
- 7 CFR Part 3019: Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations.

In addition to the directives on cost allowability found in the governing OMB Circulars on Cost Principles, funds cannot be used to pay for:

- Staff time for other projects;
- Activities already supported by optional State plans for FSP outreach or nutrition education; or
- Other FNS reimbursed FSP administrative activities.

SECTION III: APPLICATION PROCESS

Letter of Intent

Interested applicants are encouraged to submit a letter of intent to apply for this grant program to:

Ms. Lynn Rodgers
Grants Management Officer
USDA, Food and Nutrition Service
Grant Management Division
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 738
Alexandria, VA 22302
Fax: 703-605-0363
Email: Lynn.Rodgers@fns.usda.gov

Letters of intent should be postmarked or received by email or fax no later than April 1, 2004.

The letter of intent does not obligate either FNS or the applicants in any way, but it provides useful information to FNS as the review process is planned.

Application Procedures

The completed application package must be received by FNS on or before 5:00 pm Eastern Time on May 14, 2004. Applications must be delivered or mailed directly to FNS or submitted electronically by accessing www.grants.gov, a new government website designed for electronic submission of applications/proposals, in sufficient time to ensure timely receipt by the deadline. Applications may be mailed directly to the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, 3101 Park Center Drive, Attention: Ms. Lynn Rodgers, Room 738, Alexandria, Virginia 22302. FNS will not accept faxed or direct e-mailed applications. For mailed applications, one original and two copies must be submitted. If you opt to mail your application we strongly suggest using a mail delivery service that guarantees delivery and allows you to track delivery to FNS. Late applications will not be considered in this competition. Additions or revisions to applications already received will not be considered.

The original application must:

- Include the signature of your authorized representative;
- Be ready for copying (single sided, unstapled, unbound, on 8 ½ by 11 paper.)
- Be on white paper.
- Be no more than 20 pages in length (excluding attachments).

Application packages must include:

- Grant proposal which responds to the criteria and includes all of the components as outlined in this solicitation;
- Standard Form 424, Application for Federal Assistance
- Data Universal Number (DUNS) on your SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance;
- Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number on the SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance, (# CFDA 10.551);
- Standard Form 424A, Budget Summary;
- Assurances-Non Construction Programs, SF-424B; and
- Certifications, i.e., drug-free workplace, non-procurement debarment and suspension, and lobbying. (The regulations governing the attached certifications require that a grantee submit the required certifications with each new grant application.)
- Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants; input sought by nonprofit private

organizations.

FNS will not accept slides, tapes, brochures, pamphlets or other such items as part of the application package.

Any questions regarding this application **must be directed to:**

Ms. Lynn Rodgers, Grants Officer
Phone: 703-305-2760
Email: Lynn.Rodgers@fns.usda.gov

Application Format

In efforts to facilitate the application process, particularly for small, first time grant applicants, FNS is providing the following suggested application format. It is strongly suggested that applicants use this format to assist technical reviewers in locating important information. However, applicants who opt not to use the format will not lose points simply for not using the format. Please see Attachment II for an outline of this suggested format. This outline is available electronically at www.fns.usda.gov/fsp. The application is not to exceed 20 pages, excluding all attachments (as identified herein). Attachments may include those items as identified in item 8 of this section as well as in the Application Procedures section.

1. Cover Page

The *Cover Page* should include:

- Name of the Project
- Name of the Organization
- Organization Address
- Name, Title, and Contact Information for Project Director
- Grant Amount Requested
- Target Population(s)
- Geographic Area Covered by the Project
- Selected Outreach Strategy

2. Executive Summary

The *Executive Summary* should provide a brief overview of the project's goal, the target population, the selected strategy, the project plans, the grant amount requested, and the management structure.

3. Need

The *Need* section should:

- Describe the geographic, demographic, and socioeconomic characteristics of your community and the population you intend to target;
- Describe barriers to food stamp participation faced by the target population;
- Include relevant data that will help describe the problem you seek to address with the project;
- Explain briefly how the proposed strategy will meet the need; and
- Explain how this project and its results might be transferable to other populations or communities.

4. Program Design and Plan

The *Program Design and Plan* section should include:

- A description of the overall project plan;
- A management plan for how the grant will be administered, managed, and overseen to maintain compliance with grant requirements;
- How confidentiality and privacy will be maintained; (Please note: Information about an individual's participation in Federal (and other government programs) is protected. Please see Attachment IV for technical information about privacy and confidentiality requirements.)
- Any anticipated problems or challenges and how they will be addressed;
- A description of partners or sub-grantees and their role in the project;
- How the project will work in coordination with the State and local food stamp offices;
- A description of any project waivers that the State/local food stamp office has agreed to prepare and submit. (Only State agencies can submit waiver requests.) The purpose of the grant is to encourage development and testing of selected outreach strategies to achieve increases in participation within the framework of existing laws and regulations. Thus, if waivers from normal program regulations are needed, they must be justified. (Please note: There are some regulations that by law cannot be waived. For example, FSP regulations require public workers/merit personnel to process food stamp applications and conduct food stamp interviews. This section cannot be waived to allow non-public workers to conduct food stamp interviews.); and
- How FSP training will be provided to staff volunteers (if used) at the start of the project and ongoing over the course of the project due to attrition or changes in policy or procedure.

A project plan table with the following components should also be included; however, it may be an attachment. Please refer to item 8 for a discussion on attachments.

- Measurable goals;
- Measurable objectives;
- Action steps;
- Person responsible for managing each task;
- Time frame (start and end dates);
- Data elements; and
- Evaluation method.

See Attachment I for a sample project plan table.

5. **Self Evaluation Plan**

The *Self Evaluation Plan* section should include:

- A description of the evaluation approach used to collect and analyze data to determine the results of the project;
- How the self evaluation will address three aspects: process (what was attempted by the project and by what means); outcome (what were the results); and cost-effectiveness;
- A description of the relationship with the State and local food stamp offices and how the data needed from them will be captured, to what extent and with what frequency;
- The types of data to be collected and how it will be incorporated into project operations. Data can include facts, statistics, or any other items of information;
- How data will be collected (questionnaires, surveys, checklists, interviews, participant feedback, focus groups, case studies, observations, records, etc.) and who will collect it;
- How data will be collected consistent with privacy requirements and how collected data will be shared with relevant entities.

6. Description of Organization

The *Description of Organization* section should describe your organization's:

- Mission;
- Past experience with food stamp outreach and other similar projects;
- Administrative capacity to manage the project;
- Financial management system; and
- Record keeping system.

7. Budget and Management

The *Budget and Management* section should include both a line item budget and narrative that includes:

- Amount of funds requested;
- A budget showing costs by line-item with each line-item supported by narrative to support how the amount was determined. (Reminder: Include funds for a two-day trip to Washington, DC for two people for a national grantee meeting.) (Note: The line item budget may be included as an attachment);
- Description of funds from other sources and in kind contributions being used for this project (if applicable);
- How the project will be cost-effective, including an estimate of the number of individuals expected to be reached and helped to enroll in the FSP;
- How integrity of the funds will be maintained;
- Roles and responsibilities or position descriptions of key personnel, including brief resumes for key personnel and their past experience with similar projects; (Note: Resumes and position descriptions may be included as attachments)
- Contingency plans that will be used to ensure that there are no disruptions in the project due to changes in key personnel, including the selection process used to find replacements for key personnel, if required;
- An organizational chart showing the chain of command with staff names and titles listed. (Note: Organizational chart may be included as an attachment.);
- Sustainability plan, including how the project will be sustained both administratively and financially once the grant has ended;
- Management plans for sub-grantees, if applicable.

8. Attachments (not included in 20 page limit)

- *Letters of Commitment with State and Local Food Stamp Offices:* Letters of commitment or memoranda of understanding with your State and local food stamp offices are **required**. At a minimum, this relationship should assure access to FSP administrative data needed to complete the self-evaluation (under prevailing disclosure and privacy policies of the FSP.) The letter or memoranda should include a brief description of the role the local or State food stamp offices will play in the project.
- *Letters of Commitment from Partners:* Letters of commitment or memorandum of understanding from other partners, such as other community or faith-based organizations, schools, health clinics, employers, other local FNS programs, retailers, or housing authority, as applicable, are **required**.
- *Letters of Endorsement:* A minimum of one and no more than two *letters of endorsement* from organizations and/or members of the community familiar with your organization is **required**.

- The project plan table, organizational chart, position descriptions, resumes, and the line item budget may also be included as attachments as noted above.
- Non-profit organizations are also required to submit:
 - A copy of the IRS Determination Letter, form 501(c)(3) or proof of application for exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code
 - A list of their Board of Directors; and
 - A financial statement signed by the treasurer of the board.

SECTION IV: REVIEW AND AWARD PROCESS

Application Screening, Review and Selection

The application screening, review, and selection process is as follows:

1. FNS will screen all applications received by the published deadline to ensure their completeness and conformity to the requirements of this announcement. Applications without the required letters of commitment or memorandum of agreement from the State and local food stamp offices and cooperating partners will be considered incomplete/nonresponsive and will not be forwarded to the review panel for consideration. FNS reserves the right not to review applications that exceed the maximum page limit of 20 pages.
2. Applications that meet the screening requirements will be referred to a technical review panel composed of USDA staff, possibly other Federal agency staff and other individuals committed to furthering the goals of the FSP.
3. The panel will convene to competitively review each application, determine the technical merit of each application and give each application a numerical score using the technical criteria and weights below.
4. The panel will rank the applications by score from highest to lowest.
5. In general, the panel will make recommendations to the selection official for awards in rank order until the total available funds are exhausted.
6. The selection official will consider panel recommendations; however he or she may consider other USDA or FNS priorities such as geographic, demographic or socioeconomic diversity, variety of strategies, and agency priorities in addition to the scores assigned by the technical review panel.

The selection official may also determine that, based on their scores, few of the applications are of technical merit. In such a case, FNS may cancel the competition or award fewer awards or smaller awards than expected or no awards. In addition, FNS reserves the option to select one or more lower rated applications in order to achieve a diversity of strategies, target populations, and regional representation.

7. Applicants will be notified of the funding decisions in writing no later than September 2004. Funds will be issued no later than September 30, 2004.
8. Grantees must sign a grant agreement, which contains the terms and conditions of the grant.

Determination of Award Amounts

Applications selected and approved for funding with budgets that are realistic, and well justified and supported will likely be funded at the requested amounts. However, FNS reserves the right to fund applications:

- Out of rank order to achieve Departmental priorities as earlier identified; or
- At lesser amounts if it judges that the project can be implemented with less funding; or
- At lesser amounts if Federal funding is not sufficient to fully fund all applications that merit awards.

Technical Evaluation Criteria

1. Need/Understanding of the Problem (10 points)

- Need for the outreach project is clearly presented and documented by data. (5 points)
- The proposed strategy addresses the identified barriers and need. (5 points)

2. Soundness of Program Design and Plan (40 points total)

Program Design (15 points)

- The proposed plan is of high quality and appears feasible given the resources.
- The goals and objectives are measurable and time framed.
- The plan demonstrates a workable relationship with the State and local food stamp offices in order to implement the project and obtain necessary data.
- The plan demonstrates a workable relationship with other community partners.
- Required letters of commitment from State and local food stamp offices and from collaborating partners demonstrate a legitimate agreement between the agencies and partners and clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of each party.
- The plan demonstrates a feasible plan for training volunteers (if used) and staff at the start of the project and on an ongoing basis as needed.

Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality (10 points)

- The proposed plan demonstrates an understanding of the importance of privacy and confidentiality in project implementation and describes how privacy and confidentiality will be protected.

Self-Evaluation Plan (10 points)

- The self-evaluation is well thought out, organized, feasible, reasonable, and appropriate to address the project goal and need.
- The data collection plan is well thought out, organized, feasible, reasonable, and appropriate to address the project goal and need.
- The plan has likely ability to be replicated by other organizations.
- The plan has a means to measure project outcome.

Sustainability (5 points)

- The proposal includes a feasible and reasonable plan to sustain the project once grant funding ends.

3. Organizational Experience and Capacity (15 points)

- The proposal demonstrates the applicant's credibility and capability to undertake the project as presented.
- The proposal demonstrates the chain of command, roles and responsibilities of all partners and appropriate plans for managing outside personnel.
- Previous experience with similar projects.

4. Efficiency of Budget and Management Capabilities (30 points total)

Budget (15 points)

- The proposal includes a line item budget that demonstrates how the funds will be

- spent, by whom, and for what purpose.
- The proposal contains a budget narrative that clearly explains and fully justifies each cost.
- The proposal demonstrates that the project will be efficient in terms of the number of people to be reached for the proposed cost.

Management (15 points)

- The proposal identifies the project director and other key staff. The proposal demonstrates appropriate experience and qualifications of the key staff for their proposed roles. The proposal includes brief resumes for key staff.
- The proposal demonstrates that effective communication will exist among staff and partners as necessary to implement the project and collect data.
- The proposal demonstrates adequate and appropriate contingency plans to hire and train staff as turnover occurs.

5. **Presentation** (5 points)

- Application is well presented, well organized, well written, and free of major typographical and grammatical errors.
- Application is single sided, on 8 ½ by 11-inch paper, font is at least 12 point, and margins are at least one inch.

Attachment I: Sample Project Plan Table

Applicants Please Note: The following is a basic example of how to present your project plan table. Your plan will be more detailed and more comprehensive. This example is presented to give you basic guidelines and a sample format. A plan may have more than one goal. Each goal may have several objectives.

Goal 1: Manage a pre-screening and application assistance project to increase the number of eligible people participating in the Food Stamp Program in River County through a partnership with River County Interfaith Coalition (RCIC).					
Objective 1.1: Use the FNS pre-screening tool to pre-screen 100 people per month throughout the grant project period at the RCIC job-training site on Main Street.					
Action Steps	Responsible Person	Time Frame		Data Elements	Evaluation Method
		Start	End		
1.1.1 Purchase computer equipment, software and Internet service.	Peter Jones, Purchasing Agent	9/1/04	9/15/04	N/A	Items purchased on time. Items meet specifications for pre-screening project.
1.1.2 Obtain FSP informational materials such as posters, brochures, etc.	Nancy Fletcher, Outreach Director	9/1/04	9/15/04	N/A	Materials obtained on time. Materials are appropriate for target audience of working poor.
1.1.3 Set up Food Stamp Information Desk at job training site	Nancy Fletcher, Outreach Director	9/1/04	9/15/04	N/A	Desk is set up on time.
1.1.4 Install computer and Internet service at Information Desk.	Elizabeth Craig, IT Administrator	9/16/04	9/18/04	N/A	Installation occurs properly and on time. Security and inventory control for equipment is provided.
1.1.5 Train job training assistants to use FNS pre-screening tool	Nancy Fletcher, Outreach Director	9/18/04	9/18/04	N/A	Training occurs on time. Assistants can use tool and answer basic questions.

Goal 1: Manage a pre-screening and application assistance project to increase the number of eligible people participating in the Food Stamp Program in River County through a partnership with River County Interfaith Coalition (RCIC).					
Objective 1.1: Use the FNS pre-screening tool to pre-screen 100 people per month throughout the grant project period at the RCIC job-training site on Main Street.					
		Time Frame			
1.1.6 Create and use log sheets to track use of pre-screening tool.	Nancy Fletcher, Outreach Director	9/1/04	9/15/04	Number of people pre-screened. Number of people estimated to be eligible. Number of people estimated ineligible.	Log sheet is created on time. Assistants know how to use log sheets correctly. Log sheets meet data collection needs for project self-evaluation while maintaining confidentiality.
1.1.7 Pre-screen job training site participants for food stamps.	Betsy Curtis and Robert Mills, Job Training Assistants	9/19/04	Ongoing	As above in #6.	Log sheet is used to track data elements on a monthly basis.

Goal 1: Manage a pre-screening and application assistance project to increase the number of eligible people participating in the Food Stamp Program in River County through a partnership with River County Interfaith Coalition (RCIC).					
Objective 1.2: Assist 100 percent of persons estimated to be eligible for food stamps through pre-screening to apply for benefits if they so choose.					
Action Steps	Responsible Person	Time Frame		Data Elements	Evaluation Method
		Start	End		
1.2.1					
1.2.2					

Applicant would complete another table for this objective as above.

Attachment II: Electronic Application Outline

Note to Applicants: It is FNS' goal to simplify the application process as much as practicable to enable small, community and faith based organizations to apply for these grants. To that end, the following pages contain a blank outline of the suggested application format. By using this outline, you can insert your own information to complete certain sections of the application. This application format is not required, although using it will assist reviewers in locating important information, and may facilitate your application process.

This outline was created in Microsoft Word, version 9.0. To use it, simply copy and paste the outline into a blank Word document and input your own information under each section. Please be sure that you refer to the application instructions carefully so that no required elements are left out of your application narrative. Also remember not to exceed the 20-page limit (excluding attachments.)

Cover Page

Name of Project:

Name of Organization:

Address of Organization:

Name of Project Director:

Title of Project Director:

Phone Number of Project Director:

Email for Project Director:

Grant Amount Requested:

Target Population:

Geographic Target Area:

Selected Outreach Strategy:

Executive Summary

Project Goal:

Target Population:

Selected Strategy:

Grant Amount Requested:

Project Plans:

Management Structure:

Need

Characteristics of community:

Characteristics of target population:

Barriers to participation:

Description of the problem (including data):

How the strategy responds to the need:

How this project is transferable to other communities:

Program Design and Plan

Overall project plan:

Management plan:

How confidentiality and privacy will be maintained:

Challenges or problems and proposed solutions:

Partners and sub-grantees (if applicable):

Coordination with State and local agencies:

Waivers:

Training:

Self-Evaluation Plan

Description of the evaluation approach used to collect and analyze data to determine the results of the project:

How the self-evaluation will address three aspects: process (what was attempted by the project and by what means); outcome (what were the results); and cost-effectiveness:

How others might replicate the project:

A description of the relationship with the State and local food stamp offices and how the data needed from them will be captured, to what extent and with what frequency:

Types of data needed and how it incorporated into project operations:

How data will be collected and who will collect it:

Description of the Organization

Mission:

Experience:

Capacity:

Financial management system:

Record keeping system:

Budget and Management

Grant funds requested:

Description of funds from other sources or in kind contributions (if applicable):

Line item budget and narrative (line item budget may be an attachment):

How the project is cost effective:

How funds integrity will be maintained:

Roles and responsibilities of key personnel:

Contingency plans in the instance of key personnel turnover:

Resumes for key personnel (may be an attachment):

Organizational chart (may be an attachment):

How the project will be sustainable:

Management plans for sub-grantees (if applicable):

Attachments

Letters of Commitment or Memorandum of Agreement with State and Local Food Stamp Offices
(required)

Letters of Commitment or Memorandum of Agreement with Partners (required)

Letters of Endorsement (required)

Project Plan Table

Organizational Chart

Resumes and Position Descriptions

Line Item Budget

Non-profits only: IRS Determination Letter, List of Board of Directors, and Signed Financial
Statement

Project Plan Table Template

Goal 1:					
Objective 1.1:					
Action Steps	Responsible Person	Time Frame		Data Elements	Evaluation Method
		Start	End		
1.1.1					
1.1.2					
1.1.3					
1.1.4					

Goal 1:					
Objective 1.2:					
Action Steps	Responsible Person	Time Frame		Data Elements	Evaluation Method
		Start	End		
1.2.1					
1.2.2					
1.2.3					
1.2.4					

Goal 2:					
Objective 1.1:					
Action Steps	Responsible Person	Time Frame		Data Elements	Evaluation Method
		Start	End		
2.1.1					
2.1.2					
2.1.3					
2.1.4					

Attachment III: Food Stamp Program (FSP) Outreach Resources

- FNS Pre-screening Tool: www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov

This simple, low literacy online pre-screening tool enables users to input their information privately and based on their information, tells them if they might be eligible for food stamp benefits and how much they might receive.

- Flyer: “10 Steps to Help You Fill Your Grocery Bag Through the Food Stamp Program”: http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/applicant_recipients/10steps.htm

This low literacy document outlines the 10 steps needed to apply for food stamp benefits.

- Basic FSP Documents Translated into 35 Languages: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/translations.htm>

Five basic Food Stamp Program documents have been translated into 35 languages. The files can easily be downloaded at the local level for simple copying and distribution. The following documents are available in all 35 languages:

- Questions and Answers About Getting and Using Food Stamps (FNS-313): A brochure that provides useful information about the FSP.
- Public Charge: A notice to reassure immigrants that receiving food stamps will not make them public charges, so that it will not affect their immigration status.
- Immigrant Eligibility Questions and Answers: A series of facts of interest to immigrants about eligibility for food stamp benefits, based on changes in the 2002 Farm Bill.
- Documents Needed to Apply for Food Stamps: A list (in English and the target language) of documents that may be needed to prove eligibility for food stamp benefits.
- Fact Sheet on Eligibility: Ten facts about the FSP for elderly (60 and older) and disabled persons.

An “I Speak” document is also available at this site. This document allows a person to indicate to a caseworker or advocate what language they speak so that accommodations can be made.

- Food Stamp Make America Stronger posters and flyers: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/info.htm>

Posters and flyers featuring the theme “Food Stamps Make America Stronger” are available free through this online order form. Some materials are available in Spanish. Materials are available for each of the target audiences plus the general public.

- Food Stamp Notes: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/retailers/pdfs/Fall-2003.pdf>

A quarterly newsletter for authorized retailers participating in the Food Stamp Program.

- Flyer: Common Food Stamp Myths Concerning Elderly Households: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/Translations/English/10mythsp1.pdf>

Ten common myths about food stamp benefits and the elderly are refuted by simple facts about the program.

- Brochure: Questions and Answers about the Food Stamp Program:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/Translations/English/313Brochure-03.pdf>

This document is the basic brochure about the program benefits, eligibility requirements, and how to apply. It is also available in 34 other languages (see above.)

- Food Stamp Program Participation Data:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/FSP/Participation.htm>

This website features data compiled by FNS' Office of Analysis, Nutrition, and Evaluation and features studies focusing on participation in the FSP and describing the characteristics of households already receiving food stamp benefits.

- Economic Impact of Food Stamps:
http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/researchers/ers_reports.htm

This web page contains links to studies about food stamp benefits and economics conducted by USDA's Economic Research Service, which is USDA's main source of economic information and research.

- Census Bureau Data: <http://www.census.gov/>

The Census Bureau web site has vast amounts of data on income and poverty levels across the country and by State.

- USDA Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives:
<http://www.usda.gov/fbci/index.html>

This web site includes background information about USDA's initiatives for faith-based and community organizations.

Attachment IV: Technical Guidance on Confidentiality and Privacy Requirements

Confidential information, for purposes of this grant, refers to information or data of a personal nature about an individual, or information or data submitted by or pertaining to an institution or organization. Confidential information must not be disclosed without the prior written consent of the individual, institution or organization, unless other Federal, State or local laws apply. Safeguards are required to limit the use or disclosure of personal information obtained from applicant households to persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of the Food Stamp Program.

Whenever the grantee is uncertain about the proper handling of material under the Grant, or whether the material in question is confidential information, the grantee should obtain a written determination from the FNS Grant Officer.

Project management must be aware of and be leaders in applying principles of respecting the confidentiality of personal information, and ensuring that project staff are aware of and acknowledge their responsibilities. Employee and volunteer staff's access to confidential information indicates a level of trust bestowed upon them by the project management as well as the project participants. Project staff needs to be held responsible for their actions, and need to be aware of and acknowledge their responsibilities.

Staff need guidance in determining the sensitivity of the information to which they have access and to protect the information they are processing from access by, or disclosure to unauthorized personnel. Procedures need to be developed to properly control, label, store, and destroy information. Policies should also be established for security incidents and compromises, and potential threats and vulnerabilities to be immediately reported. A sample employee/volunteer confidentiality agreement form follows.

Sample Employee/Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement Form

You are participating as an employee or a volunteer in a project to inform and educate potentially eligible low-income people about the benefits to participating in the Food Stamp Program. This project includes collecting confidential information about individuals to help them decide if they are eligible and help them apply to receive food stamp benefits. An important part of the project is respecting participants' privacy, and treating personal information that they voluntarily provide as confidential. Confidential information must not be disclosed without prior written consent of the individual, and disclosure is limited to persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of the Food Stamp Program.

In signing this form, you are acknowledging your responsibilities to:

- Maintain privacy of personal information;
- Ensure that all sensitive data, whether processed manually or with computers, receives the same degree of protection;
- Follow procedures to log-off and secure information, not allowing it to be left unattended;
- Protect information from theft, fraud, misuse, loss, or unauthorized access or modification;
- Access or attempt to access only the data or resources specifically authorized;
- Protect against unauthorized disclosure or use, and protect information from casual inspection or unauthorized retrieval; and
- Report promptly to the supervisor any violations or breaches of security, or unusual processing results or observed irregularities with sensitive data.

Any questions about your responsibilities should be discussed with your supervisor.

To be completed by the employee/volunteer:

I, _____, had read and understand my responsibilities to protect confidential information and will perform my duties accordingly.

Signature

Date

To be completed by the employee's/volunteer's supervisor:

I, _____, certify that _____ has been provided with the responsibilities to protect confidential information, I have discussed the responsibilities with him/her, and have answered or obtained answers to his/her questions.

Signature

Date

Informed Consent

An important part of the research component of this project is ensuring that the project participants are aware of what you are doing, and are cooperating with the evaluation voluntarily. If the evaluation involves methods such as surveys, interviews, etc., versus methods such as observations, etc., participants must be allowed their privacy, and provided the right to refuse to give any personal information or to answer questions.

Grantee staff must explain the evaluation activities and what will be required of the participants as part of the evaluation effort. Grantee staff must make it clear that the participants' names will not be used and that the information they provide will not be linked to them. The participants must sign an informed consent form, which documents that they understand their role in the evaluation, know what is expected of them, agree or disagree to participate, and understand that they have the right to refuse to give any information. A sample informed consent form appears below. Grantees may need to revise the form for low literacy or translate it into other languages, depending on the population being served by the project.

Sample Informed Consent Form

We would like you to participate in the Evaluation of [project name]. Your participation is important to us and will help us assess the effectiveness of the project. As a participant in the project we will ask you to [complete a questionnaire/answer questions in an interview/other task].

We will keep all of your answers confidential. Your name will never be included in any reports and none of your answers will be linked to you in any way. The information you provide will be combined with information from everyone else participating in the study.

You do not have to participate in the evaluation. Even if you agree to participate now, you may stop participating at any time or refuse to answer any question. Refusing to be part of the evaluation will not affect your participation or the services you receive from the project.

If you have any questions about the study, you may call [name and phone contact].

By signing below, you confirm that this form has been explained to you and that you understand it.

Please check one:

☐ I agree to participate ☐ I do not agree to participate

Signature

Date

Attachment V: Quarterly Progress Report (Suggested Format)

Note: This report format is designed not only to inform FNS of the progress of your grant but also to help you track data and information as part of your self-evaluation. It is important to report positive, negative and inconclusive results. This helps FNS learn what does or doesn't work and to try to identify the reasons. Although results may be inconclusive, the processes used may be worthy of study. The more details provided about the project, the more useful the self-evaluation is likely to be to FNS and to the grantee.

Grant Number:

Report Submission Date:

Grant Recipient (name and address):

Project Director (name, phone number, e-mail address):

Target Population (circle one and elaborate with brief narrative explanation):

Working Poor
Seniors
Immigrants

Strategy (circle one and elaborate with brief narrative explanation):

1. Community Events/Education Campaign
2. Partnerships with Employers
3. Partnerships with Retailers
4. Partnerships with FNS Programs
5. Out-stationing/Site Visiting

Progress This Reporting Period:

(In addition to a narrative description of progress, a copy of your project plan table with an additional column labeled "Progress as of <report date>" may be attached.)

Significant Achievements/Accomplishments This Reporting Period:

Difficulties/Challenges Encountered and Resolutions Taken or Planned:

Adjustments/Deviations from Project Plan:

Planned Activities Next Reporting Period:

Summary of Outcome Data	For This Reporting Period Dates:	From Project Start Through This Report Dates:
Number of potential applicants reached through this project		

Number of project clients pre-screened for benefits		
Number of project clients referred to food stamp office		
Number of project contacts that applied for benefits		
Number of food stamp applications filed at sites other than the local food stamp office		
Number of food stamp project applications filed electronically		
Number of project applicants approved for benefits		
Number of project applicants denied benefits*		
Administrative cost** per client served		

* Provide reasons for the denials, if available.

**Amount of Federal funds expended to date divided by number of persons served by the project to date.

Signature of Authorized Official _____ **Date** _____

Attachment VI: Final Progress Report (Suggested Format)

Note: This report format is designed not only to inform FNS of the progress of your grant but also to help you track data and information as part of your self-evaluation. It is important to report positive, negative and inconclusive results. This helps FNS learn what does or doesn't work and to try to identify the reasons. Although results may be inconclusive, the processes used may be worthy of study. The more details provided about the project, the more useful the self-evaluation is likely to be to FNS and to the grantee.

Grant Number:

Project Start/End Dates:

Grant Recipient (name and address):

Project Director (name, phone number, e-mail address):

Organizational Description (include how the organization's structure, type, size, location, etc., impacted the implementation of the project):

Target Population (circle one, and discuss the extent of the organization's involvement with the target population before the project, and how these links affected the results of the project):

Working Poor
Elderly
Immigrants

Strategy (circle one, and describe partnerships/collaborative efforts, the various roles/responsibilities of other entities, and their contribution to the project's outcome):

1. Community Events/Education Campaign
2. Partnerships with Employers
3. Partnerships with Retailers
4. Partnerships with FNS Programs
5. Out-stationing/Site Visiting

Summary of Project:

Staffing/Budget Info (include paid/volunteer staff and grant/other funding and in-kind contributions):

Overall Goal:

Barriers to Participation (discuss how issues regarding non-participation were identified, addressed, overcome/reduced):

Final Summary Progress Report of the Project from Start to Finish:

(In addition to a narrative description of progress, a copy of your project plan table with an additional column labeled “Final Progress Report” may be attached.)

Major Achievements/Accomplishments:

Lessons Learned:

Major Difficulties/Challenges and Solutions Developed (include issues that may have affected the project outcome, such as changes in: staffing, collaborative arrangements, target population/participant characteristics, etc.):

Summary of Outcome Data	For Project Period
Number of potential applicants reached through this project	
Number of project clients pre-screened for benefits	
Number of project clients referred to food stamp office	
Number of project contacts that applied for benefits	
Number of food stamp applications filed at sites other than the local food stamp office	
Number of food stamp project applications filed electronically	
Number of project applicants approved for benefits	
Number of project applicants denied benefits	
Administrative cost per client served	

Evaluation Methodology (types of data/information collected, how collected, how analyzed, limitations and cautions on its use, interpretations and conclusions):

Findings (food stamp participation rates pre/post project intervention, and comparative data from other areas, explanations for increase/decrease/neutral effect of project on participation):

Conclusions (whether project participants demonstrated changes in awareness, knowledge, attitude, behavior, and if these changes are likely the result of the project’s interventions):

Recommendations for Replication by Other Organizations (include discussion of what changes you would make or what you would do differently):

Sustainability Plan:

Other Comments (include feedback from project staff, volunteers, food stamp office contacts, project clients, etc.):

Signature of Authorized Official _____ Date _____